

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145
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FOR HODDING CARTER FROM PA/PRESS

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

NO. 13

SPOKESMAN MADE TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS AT THE JULY 17 BRIEFING:

"THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE THEIR MEETINGS IN HELSINKI, FINLAND, BEGINNING JULY 18, 1978, ON ISSUES RELATING TO THE LIMITATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS. THE TWO COUNTRIES HELD PREVIOUS MEETINGS ON THIS TOPIC IN WASHINGTON FROM DECEMBER 14 - 19, 1977, AND IN HELSINKI FROM MAY 4-8, THIS YEAR.

AMBASSADOR L.I. MENDELEVICH WILL REPRESENT THE SOVIET SIDE. LESLIE H. GELB, THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF POLITICO-MILITARY AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WILL REPRESENT THE AMERICAN SIDE."

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145

SECOND STATEMENT:

"WE DEPLORE THE HARSH SENTENCE METED OUT IN VILNIUS, LITHUANIA, ON THURSDAY, JULY 13, TO VIKTORAS PETKUS, A LITHUANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF A GROUP WHICH MONITORED SOVIET COMPLIANCE WITH THE HELSINKI

ACCORDS.

"A VETERAN OF SOVIET LABOR CAMPS, MR. PETKUS RECEIVED A SEVERE SENTENCE OF THREE YEARS IN PRISON, SEVEN IN LABOR CAMPS, FOLLOWED BY FIVE IN INTERNAL EXILE FOR "ANTI-SOVIET ACTIVITIES."

THE STATEMENT ABOUT PETKUS ELICITED MINIMUM INTEREST IN THE PRESS CORPS, BUT THE HELSINKI ARMS TRANSFER TALKS GENERATED SUBSTANTIAL FOLLOWUP:

Q WHY GO AHEAD IN THE PRESENT CLIMATE?

A WE ARE CONTINUING THESE TALKS BECAUSE, AS WITH OTHER ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS, IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF OUR NATIONAL SECURITY TO DO SO. THE INCREASINGLY RAPID BUILD-UP OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS AROUND THE WORLD POSES A SERIOUS RISK TO REGIONAL STABILITY AND THUS TO WORLD PEACE. THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE THE TWO LARGEST ARMS SUPPLIERS. WE HAVE BEEN REDUCING OUR OWN ARMS EXPORTS, BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS HELD FROM THE BEGINNING THAT REVERSING THE DANGEROUS WORLD-WIDE ARMS REQUIRES MULTILATERAL RESTRAINT. THIS IS A LONG-TERM PROCESS. A START HAS BEEN MADE. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE CONTINUE TO ENGAGE THE SOVIET UNION IN THIS EFFORT. THESE TALKS ARE A CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSIONS BEGUN LAST DECEMBER. THIS UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145

PARTICULAR ROUND HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR A NUMBER OF WEEKS. THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAVE CONSISTENTLY EXPRESSED OUR DEEP CONCERN WITH THE VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE SOVIET UNION. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE SEEK TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF WAR IN AN INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS WORLD THROUGH THE PURSUIT OF SOUND AND VERIFIABLE ARMS CONTROL.

Q WHAT DO WE EXPECT TO RESULT?

A THESE TALKS ARE AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF OUR EFFORT TO DEVELOP A COMMON APPROACH TO ARMS TRANSFER RESTRAINT AMONG ARMS SUPPLIERS AND RECIPIENTS. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS WITH THE SOVIET UNION WOULD EVENTUALLY HELP TO RESTRAIN ARMS SALES. SPECIFICALLY, WE WOULD HOPE TO LIMIT ADVANCED AND EXPENSIVE WEAPONS AND AVOID THE ADVERSE POLITICAL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS WHICH MAY RESULT FROM TRANSFERS TO VARIOUS REGIONS.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE LEGITIMATE DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET. LET ME SAY THAT WE ARE NOT REALLY EXPECTING TO REACH A FORMAL AGREEMENT AT SUCH AN EARLY STAGE

SINCE WE ARE DISCUSSING A HIGHLY COMPLEX AND SENSITIVE

PROBLEM. HOWEVER, WE HOPE TO FIND SUFFICIENT COMMON GROUND TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS TOWARD CONCRETE RESTRAINT MEASURES.

PRESS WAS FASCINATED BY QUESTION OF WHETHER US HAD CONSIDERED CANCELLING THESE TALKS, BUT SPOKESMAN DID NOT PROVIDE ANSWER.

AS TO CHINESE ASSERTION OF THEIR WILLINGNESS TO TALK DIRECTLY WITH TAIWANESE, SPOKESMAN SAID:

"OUR POSITION AS STATED IN THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE REMAINS UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145

THE SAME. THE UNITED STATES HOPES THE CHINESE WILL SETTLE THE ISSUE OF TAIWAN PEACEFULLY BY THEMSELVES. NATURALLY, WE WOULD WELCOME ANY MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION."

PRIOR TO FILING BREAK, RESTON VOLUNTEERED TWO STATEMENTS:

"ON THE QUESTION OF LEBANON, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS GRATIFIED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS OF LEBANON THAT HE INTENDS TO REMAIN IN OFFICE. SECRETARY VANCE SENT A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT SARKIS WARMLY WELCOMING THIS DECISION. WE HOPE THAT THIS DECISION WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A REDUCTION IN TENSIONS AND TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE RECENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THE UNIFYING POLICIES HE HAS REPRESENTED."

"THERE WERE PRESS REPORTS OVER THE PAST WEEKEND OF A KILLING OF 21 BLACK RHODESIAN VILLAGERS. WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THE INCIDENT BEYOND THE REPORTS WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THE PRESS. WE CONDEMN ALL ACTS OF VIOLENCE DIRECTED AGAINST INNOCENT CIVILIANS.

"IN ADDITION TO THE DREADFUL HUMAN COSTS OF THESE ATROSTIES, THE CONTINUATION OF SUCH INCIDENTS VARIOUSLY ATTRIBUTED TO BOTH SIDES, CAN ONLY INCREASE THE BITTERNESS AND SUSPICIONS AMONG RHODESIANS. WE AGAIN URGE ALL PARTIES TO REFRAIN FROM ACTIONS WHICH INEVITABLY MAKE THE TASK OF FINDING A NEGOTIATED END TO THE CONFLICT MORE DIFFICULT."

SPOKESMAN ALSO CONFIRMED THAT DEPARTMENT HAD ISSUED VISA

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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145

FOR BISHOP MUZOREWA TO ENTER US, NOTING THAT HE IS
"...A LEADING RHODESIAN NATIONALIST WITH WHOM WE HAVE
MAINTAINED CONTINUAL CONTACT AND WHO WE HAVE ALWAYS
ASSUMED WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN A NEGOTI-
ATED SETTLEMENT LEADING TO AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE."
SPOKESMAN THEN TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND ON THE
ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON RHODESIA:

"...THIS ADMINISTRATION IS NOT SIDING WITH THE PATRIOTIC
FRONT. THERE CANNOT BE A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT UNLESS BOTH
THE LIBERATION FORCES AND THE SALISBURY PARTIES ARE
SATISFIED.

"WHAT WE ARE SEEKING IS AGREEMENT BY ALL PARTIES TO FAIR
ELECTIONS UNDER NEUTRAL TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS. SHOULD
THE PATRIOTIC FRONT MAKE A DEMAND WHICH IS INCONSISTENT
WITH FAIR ELECTIONS, WE WOULD OPPOSE IT, JUST AS WE WOULD
REJECT DEMANDS BY THE SALISBURY PARTIES WHICH WOULD DENY
FAIR ELECTIONS.

"BOTH SIDES HAVE AGREED TO ELECTIONS, BUT BOTH STILL SEEK
TO DOMINATE THE TRANSITION PERIOD. THE GOAL WHICH WE
SEEK IS TO SECURE AGREEMENT TO A TRANSITION PROCESS IN
WHICH NO PARTY WOULD DOMINATE. TO ACHIEVE THIS WE NEED
TO MAINTAIN OUR ABILITY TO WORK WITH ALL PARTIES AND TO
PRESS ALL PARTIES TOWARD AN AGREEMENT."

ASKED WHETHER DEPARTMENT AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S
SPECULATION THAT RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES MIGHT HAVE BEEN
RESPONSIBLE FOR MASSACRES OF MISSIONARIES, SPOKESMAN
SAID:

"AS IN THE CASE OF SEVERAL OTHER INCIDENTS REPORTED IN
RECENT WEEKS RESULTING IN CIVILIAN DEATHS AND VARIOUSLY
ATTRIBUTED TO BOTH SIDES IN THE RHODESIAN CONFLICT, WE
ARE NOT IN A POSITION DEFINITELY TO ESTABLISH SPECIFIC
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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 180846 TOSEC 080145

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THAT INCIDENT. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO
SUPPORT A CLAIM THAT THE RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES WERE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT INCIDENT. IN THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR
EVIDENCE, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR US TO
SPECULATE ON WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE.

"THE POINT IS THAT THE PATTERN OF INCREASING CIVILIAN

DEATHS PRESENTS A TRAGEDY FOR THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF
THOSE WHO WERE KILLED AND FOR RHODESIA AS A WHOLE.

"AS WE HAVE SAID, ANY AND ALL ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST
INNOCENT CIVILIANS ARE TO BE CONDEMNED REGARDLESS OF WHO
MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE. AMBASSADOR YOUNG SHARES THESE
VIEWS. CHRISTOPHER

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